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ABSTRACT

A study investigated communication apprehension in the Philippines and compared its incidence there with that in populations in the United States, Australia, China, Japan, Korea, and Micronesia. The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension for College Students (PRCA) was administered to 312 students in Manila, as well as to comparable numbers of students in the other countries. The findings showed that the Filipinos were significantly less apprehensive about communication than all other groups, except the Koreans. The findings indicate that communication apprehension is not as serious a problem in the Philippines as it is in most of the other countries studied, and that it may be the result of certain cultural influences. (FL)

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COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION: ITS INCIDENCE IN THE PHILIPPINES AND ELSEWHERE

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[A paper prepared for the Communication Association of the Pacific--Philippines Lecture Series, November 23, 1980, Manila.]

Allegedly affecting more American students than such handicaps as speech impairment, mental retardation, emotional disturbances, deafness, blindness and physical disabilities (15), apprehension about communicating is rightfully viewed as a learning disability. As a result, its nature has been extensively researched in America (3) and to a lesser degree in other cultures, notable Australia (6), China (1), Japan (3), Korea (26), and Micronesia (33).

This study investigated in an exploratory manner communication apprehension in the Philippines and compares the incidence there with populations in America and the aforementioned countries. For study purposes, it was hypothesized that there would be no significant difference between the Filipinos, the Americans, Australians, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and Micronesians.

Communication apprehension (CA) refers to an anxiety syndrome associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons (14). The CA syndrome does not hold the same meanings psychiatrists attach to general anxiety, that is, the biological and psychological reactions of the ego which are aimed at self preservation and characterized by a constant state of alertness (12). CA is restricted to communication situations and the anxiety syndrome materializes only when some form of communication is imminent.

Anticipation about communication may take many forms, only a few of which have been carefully measured and their effects studied. Speaking, writing and singing are among these. Apprehension about oral communication, however, is apparently the most common form and it has been the most widely researched (15). In the present discussion, CA is considered in relation to oral communication.

CA, therefore, is a person's level of fear or anxiety resulting from either real or expected talk with one or more persons. Those who have a high degree of apprehension experience fear or anxiety in almost every communication encounter or anticipated encounter. Not only do they suffer the common "stage fright" the average person feels when giving a speech to an audience, they are almost always fearful or anxious in all speaking situations including the public speaking situation. Their fear or anxiety

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surpasses any rewards they think they will get by talking; thus, they either do not speak at all or avoid speaking unless obligated to do so. When forced to speak, they appear to others as shy, non-assertive, nervous, embarrassed, uncomfortable, and reticent. They respond negatively to any oral communication situation, real or anticipated, public or private, involving any number of people in small or large groups (15).

Data collected from thousands of elementary, secondary and college students and from thousands of people in the business and professions support that conclusion. The data reveal that 20 per cent or more of these people suffer to the extent that CA interferes with their ability to communicate normally (27). Because of their oral ineffectiveness, high apprehensives are not positively perceived and this negative perception affects their economic (7, 8, 10, 17), political (29), social (20, 18, 19, 17), and academic lives.

Method

As first reported in 1970 (14), the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension for College Students (PRCA) has been used in over 150 studies (16). The respondent can agree or disagree on a five-point scale with 20 items concerning oral communication apprehension. He indicates his feelings about communicating in dyadic, small group, and public speaking situations. The total apprehension score is the sum of the scores on the 20 items. Highly apprehensive persons score between 70 and 80, the severely apprehensive over 80.

The PRCA was administered to 312 Speechpower students in Manila; 153 University of Guam students; 219 Armidale College of Advanced Education students in Australia; 504 Otsuma Women's, Yokohama City, Nihon and Waseda University students in Japan; 73 Hankuk University of Foreign Studies students in Korea; 184 Peking Institute of Foreign Language students in China, and 397 University of Hawaii students. An equal mixture of males and females, the students ranged in age from 18 to 24 years (M = 20 years) and were at similar education levels. The Chinese, Japanese and Koreans were English trained and responded to the PRCA in its English version. In the three countries, teachers of English as a second language collaborated in collecting the data.

The Tuccy t-test procedure (31) for independent samples of unequal size was used to compare populations.

Results

The results of the comparisons between the Filipinos (M = 58.09, SD = 10.59) and the other groups were: Americans (M = 63.34, SD = 12.48, $p < .001$), Australians (M = 60.37, SD = 12.94, $p < .05$), Chinese (M = 62.18, SD = 11.23, $p < .001$), Japanese (M = 65.90, SD = 10.72, $p < .001$), Koreans (M = 52.78, SD = 10.59, $p < .001$) and Micronesians (M = 60.78, SD = 13.35, $p < .05$). The Filipinos were significantly less apprehensive than the Americans, Australians, Chinese, Japanese and Micronesians, and significantly more apprehensive than the Korean.

In the high and severe apprehensive categories, the following percentages of students appeared: America (high 24.4%, severe 9.1%), Australia (high 13.7%, severe 8.7%), China (high 22.2%, severe 3.8%), Micronesia (high 16.3%, severe 6.5%), Japan (high 26.0%, severe 9.9%), Korea (high 1.4%, severe 1.4%), and the Philippines (high 11.9%, severe 1.9%). The Japanese had the highest percentage of students in the high and severe categories; the Koreans, the lowest.

Since the American student population was from the University of Hawaii, a school reportedly having a higher incidence of apprehension than other major American universities (24), the Filipinos were compared to the 2479 American university students who constituted the population used to generate the PRCA. This larger sample (M = 60.5, SD = 11.6) was significantly more apprehensive than the Filipino college students (t = 3.67, $p < .001$).

The results should be viewed as tentative and exploratory since the research involved transcultural comparisons. Such research presents epistemological and methodological difficulties that could muddy the results. Of course, the limited size and nature of the samples also may offer problems. Yet CA's presence in the sample suggests its presence among college students in general. Thus, CA seems worthy of further research. Certainly studies of CA's extent among all types of school populations are in order as are studies of its causes and effects.

Discussion

The hypothesis, that the Philippine population would not be significantly different than populations in America, Australia, the People's Republic of China, Japan, Korea and Micronesia, was rejected. The Filipinos were significantly less apprehensive than all of the other groups except the Koreans who were significantly less apprehensive than the Filipinos. Like the Koreans, the Filipinos had the lowest percentage of high and severe apprehensives, although there is considerable difference between the two groups, percentage-wise.

With almost twelve percent of the population apprehensive about communication, there should be concern about its extent and attention should be given to its reduction. However, CA is not as serious a problem in the Philippines as in most of the other countries studied and that may be the result of certain cultural influences.

Typically, the Filipino child, in contrast to the children of some of the other countries studied, grows up in a large network of relationships--kin and social. Maturation is not comparable to independence; it means instead forming an expanding and satisfying series of dependency relationships with others. The result is that Filipinos seek the company of others, preferring to do things in groups or through groups, rather than by themselves (34). They value the company of others and cannot stand being alone for long periods of time. Acceptance by others, therefore, is a vital factor in a Filipino's behavior and group harmony is encouraged (35).

Family and social relationships are maintained by communication, principally oral, and the Filipino child growing up in a strong group environment learns to

orally interact in order to be accepted and be in harmony with the others. The fear of speaking usually does not find fertile fields for development in such surroundings. So, the low level of CA among Filipinos seems explainable.

The Micronesian group contains a large percentage of Filipinos although the specific number is not known. Consequently, the Philippines and Micronesian groups could be thought to compare closely and, in a sense, they do as the results show four percentage points difference between them. But the Micronesians have more of an ethnic mix with Chamorro, Chinese, Caucasian, Palauan, Trukese and Koreans in the sample besides the Filipinos, a mix similar to the American group from Hawaii. Again, the similarities between the Hawaiians and the Micronesians could be considered comparable. However, the Hawaii group was 62 percent Japanese-American, and in Hawaii the Japanese-Americans exhibit cultural qualities much like those in Japan, including a reluctance to verbalize orally.

The ethnic constituency of the Hawaiian population may be a principal reason for the greater incidence of CA and Meredith (22) affirms this.

The use of "pidgin" or Island dialect is another important influence. Pidgin evolved in the nineteenth century to help the multiple ethnic groups communicate with one another. In the twentieth century, it was considered substandard speech, and attempts were made to eradicate pidgin in the schools. Caught between peer-group and parental uses of pidgin and the school pressures to eliminate it, many children developed apprehension about talking.

The Japanese result confirms the observations of other researchers. Outwardly shy, the Japanese exhibit reluctance to verbalize orally and to interact with people who do not belong to their ingroups, whatever those groups may be (4). The reasons are numerous for their hesitancy to talk with others, especially strangers. Morsbach (23) mentions the racial and cultural homogenity of the people which inhibits oral intercourse with strangers, the hierarchal structure of the society which determines who speaks to whom and how, the emphasis on silence from Zen Buddhism, and the restrictions placed on oral intercourse during the Tokugawa period, many of which remain today. Combined, these reasons account for the restraints imposed on oral communication. Apprehension is an expected result of such restrictions.

The Koreans had the lowest percentage of apprehensives, a result which is consistent with other research about Koreans. Cha, Choi, and Suh (5) portray Koreans as an outgoing, talkative people who are considered as active, aggressive, pleasant, industrious, friendly, stimulating, easy to understand, and informative. McQuerry (21) believes the Koreans are aggressive, conspicuous, and more temperamental than is usually expected of Orientals. Oliver (25) claims that Koreans do not hold their opinions but freely express them. These observations suggest a lack of apprehension.

The student sample from the People's Republic of China indicated a higher incidence of apprehension than the Koreans, those Americans who constituted the population in the development of the PRCA, the Micronesians and the Filipinos, the same as the Australians and Hawaii Americans, and less than the Japanese.

The results seem to be confirmed by reports in the literature. Goldman (11) notes that the "Great Leap Forward" in 1958 brought about a series of campaigns to change aspects of Chinese life. One campaign, "The Five Vices, " was partially designed to eliminate timidity among the people, to get them to speak up. Apparently timidity was a large enough problem that a campaign had to be launched to eradicate it. On the other hand, as Barnett (2) reveals, hsueh-hsi that is, China's program of group indoctrination, while forcing the people to talk about the Party line, caused many to be reticent about expressing their true feelings lest their intellectual independence be reason for punishment. What may be the case is that the typical Chinese is not timid about expousing the Party doctrine but may be reluctant about discussing personal feelings and beliefs with others.

While the causes of oral apprehension in Australia are not fully known, they probably differ little from those suggested by American researchers. Case study analyses (28) and broader surveys (32) indicate that the development of apprehension about speaking occurs during early childhood years. It is not considered to be a hereditary trait, rather it is learned behavior, one that is conditioned through reinforcement of the child's communication behaviors (15). Regardless of the causes, this sampling of Australian university students reveals a level of apprehension similar to that of the Americans.

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